

FINAL
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS COMPLEX AND RESIDENCE
MINNESOTA VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
CARVER, MINNESOTA

In Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

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Appendix

- 1. Purpose and Need and**
- 2. Proposed Action**

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) has proposed to construct a Refuge residence as outlined under Section 2.2.2 of the *“Final Environmental Assessment, Proposed Maintenance Operations Complex and Residence, June 2003”* (FEA) for which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) issued a “Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on June 13, 2003. A two acre parcel of Service owned property located in Carver County, Minnesota directly off of County Road 45 one-quarter mile north of the intersection with County Road 50 had been identified as the site for the residence. The proposed construction area was sited immediately north of the old driveway (See Appendix A, Map #1).

This Supplemental Environmental Assessment proposes to slightly modify the building location of the Refuge residence and evaluates the environmental impact of proceeding with such a modification. The Service’s Regional Director will decide whether this Supplemental Environmental Assessment supports a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will need to be prepared.

The Refuge has a need to evaluate a new proposed building location for the Refuge residence based upon a request received from the adjacent landowner and representatives of the San Francisco Township Board. The Refuge has proposed to construct a bunkhouse in the same vicinity as the residence. The private landowner and Township Board representatives requested Service staff to consider constructing the residence, rather than the bunkhouse, in the location which is situated closer to the private landowner. Whether a bunkhouse will actually be constructed in this vicinity will be analyzed under a separate Environmental Assessment that will be released shortly in draft format for public review. The only decision being considered in this Supplemental EA is to change the building location of the residence.

- 3. Affected Environment**

The new proposed construction site for the residence is located in the same general vicinity as the previously proposed development site as identified within the FEA. The new proposed site consists of a two-acre parcel of land situated immediately south of the old driveway or approximately 200’ directly south of the previous development site (See Appendix A, Map #2). T.115N., R.24W., Section 36, SW1/4NE1/4SE1/4. The physical characteristics, habitat and vegetation, public use, and cultural resources associated with this new proposed site are exactly the same as those of the previously proposed site. A topographic survey of this new site has been completed while soil testing still needs to be conducted. As with the previous site, no improvements exist at

this site. Services such as utilities, sewer, and water would be developed and would comply with Carver County Ordinance No. 47 as needed.

4. Environmental Consequences

The environmental impacts of constructing the Refuge residence at the new proposed site would be exactly the same as those identified within the FEA for the previously proposed development site. Two acres of restored prairie and soil would be impacted by the residence construction. The impact to water quality would be minor and short term since the use of siltation fencing would minimize the potential for erosion during construction. Short-term temporary impacts to wildlife would occur during residence construction. Construction activities could cause feeding disruptions and/or nest abandonment during critical nesting periods for ground nesting birds at or adjacent to the construction site. The effect would be minor since often times another suitable location to feed and/or re-nest would be found. Residence construction would remove approximately two acres of restored prairie from the Refuge and also result in the fragmentation of five acres of prairie habitat. Concurrence was obtained on July 24, 2003 via a Section 7 Consultation with Dan Stinnett of the Bloomington Ecological Services Field Office, that development at this proposed site is not likely to adversely affect nesting bald eagles and/or their critical habitat. An archaeological reconnaissance survey of the proposed site was conducted in September, 2004. Houses and other structures within one mile and within view of the proposed residence site are to be evaluated for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. The Section 106 process will be completed prior to implementation of construction. Approximately 15 acres of land would be permanently closed to public use upon the completion of construction. Construction and occupancy of the residence at this site would allow a Refuge employee to respond quickly to illegal activity anywhere on the Rapids Lake Unit. There would be no effect on the visual quality of the area resulting from residence construction. Buildings were previously present here and other rural residential housing is located directly south and west of the site. Native trees and shrubs would be planted to screen the view between the residence and the private landowner directly south of the site. No minority or low-income populations would be displaced or negatively affected in any way by this modification. The cumulative impacts of the proposed modification are similar in nature to those described in the approved FEA except that there is now a possibility that a second building, the bunkhouse, may also be constructed on this property. No additional construction beyond the two buildings is anticipated for this property.

5. List of Preparers

The following individuals cooperated in the preparation of this document:

Team Leader: Linda Malz, Park Ranger, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, research, data collection, editing, and etc.

Consultant: Jeff Gosse, Regional Environmental Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Region 3 Regional Office, Fort Snelling, Minnesota – Gave author guidance in Fish and Wildlife Service procedures for preparation of NEPA documents, editing, revision, coordination and information.

Team Member: Richard Schultz, Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Bloomington, Minnesota – Project Manager, editing, revision and etc.

Team Member: Chris Trosen, Refuge Operations Specialist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Bloomington, Minnesota – provided map preparation.

Team Member: John Dobrovolny, Regional Historic Preservation Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3 Regional Office, Fort Snelling, Minnesota – Cultural resource guidance.

Contributor: Paul Evenson, Engineer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3 Regional Office, Fort Snelling, Minnesota – Provided engineering, design and soils information.

6. Consultation and Coordination With the Public and Others

The following consultation and coordination efforts were conducted in the preparation of this document:

On August 9, 2004, the Service met at the site formerly known as the Lutz Farm, with board members and interested residents of San Francisco Township, Carver County, Minnesota, to give them information on the proposed action and alternatives for public use development, and to discuss their issues and concerns related to those projects. After a question and answer period, the board members and residents requested the Service to consider modifying the proposed bunkhouse development and the previously approved Refuge residence development. Individuals in attendance included: San Francisco Township Board members Larry Schmidt, Maidie Felton, Gerald Scott, and Peggy Hughes; residents Dan and Kris Robb and Kevin Lundquist; and Jason Mielke, Carver County Department of Planning and Zoning.

A news release concerning the proposed Refuge residence modification was issued by the Service on August 20, 2004, to solicit any issues or concerns from the public between the dates of August 23, 2004 and September 21, 2004. A copy of the Draft Supplemental EA was also posted for public

review on the Service's internet web page for Region 3 during this same comment period.

A copy of the news release announcing the availability of the Draft Supplemental EA was provided to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer, the Minnesota State Archaeologist, Carver County Department of Planning and Zoning, San Francisco Township Board, and 79 residents of San Francisco Township.

7. Public Comment on Draft Supplemental EA and Response

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received verbal and written comments on the Draft Supplemental EA. The following summarizes those comments and the Service response (*italicized*):

Sept. 7, 2004: Received request from Carver County Department of Planning and Zoning for a copy of the Refuge residence site plan so that the County could conduct a Level II review for erosion and sediment control. *The Refuge mailed Carver County five site plan drawings for the residence on Sept. 9, 2004.*

Sept. 10, 2004: Received call from San Francisco Township (SFT) Board notifying Refuge of Board's intent to mail their written comments regarding proposed Service developments. Also stated the Board's desire to have other SFT residents within ¼ mile of the project area included in the project notification/comment period. *On Sept. 10, Refuge developed resident mailing list and requested SFT Board to verify no omissions. Refuge received mailing list confirmation from Board on Sept. 11. On Sept. 13 the Refuge mailed a copy of the press release to 77 additional SFT residents. On Sept 16 the Refuge also mailed a three-page comprehensive letter to 79 SFT residents, SFT Board, and Carver County Planning and Zoning providing information on what Service projects have been completed to date in SFT and the Service's plan for future developments.*

Sept. 10, 2004: Electronic copy of SFT Board's written comments was received (Hard copy was received via postal service on Sept. 16.). Within their letter, the Board restated the outcome of an on-site meeting on 8/9/04 with Service representatives where the Service was asked to modify the location of the Refuge residence and proposed bunkhouse. The Board also expressed their opinion that any Service developments should be concentrated within the existing footprint of the original farm. *The Service considered the request and initiated a new NEPA process to analyze the proposed residence modification. As was depicted on maps and explained to the Board at the 8/9/04 meeting, both the 100 and 500 year flood plains of the Minnesota River now limit development within the original Mittelsted farmstead to a five-acre upland parcel situated on a terrace overlooking the historic home site. Building development at that site beyond the five-acre upland terrace would*

be fiscally irresponsible considering the potential for major flood activity within the area.

Sept. 15, 2004: Received call from SFT resident wanting to know what the Service mailing he had received was all about. Numerous questions specifically focusing on the proposed bunkhouse development were also asked. The resident also wanted to know who would be living in the residence. *The original planning for the residence was explained along with why the proposed modification had come about due to concern expressed by the SFT Board and adjacent landowner over the Service's proposal to construct a bunkhouse. The Service's desire is to have a Refuge Law Enforcement Officer reside in the residence.*

Sept. 16, 2004: Received call from resident expressing concern over bright outside lights on the new maintenance shop; asking for lights to be turned off during the day and shielded at night.

Sept. 20, 2004: Received call from resident questioning if Refuge residence would still be built at proposed location off of County Road 45. The resident also questioned why all Service buildings couldn't be developed at the Mittelsted farm. The question was also raised as to why the residence and bunkhouse both couldn't be developed north of the old driveway at the proposed building site. The individual also asked why State land across County Road 45 couldn't be purchased for Service developments. The resident also asked several questions related to existing Service developments (maintenance shop and parking lot) and future proposed developments (trails/trail use and road upgrades). *The Service's desire is to construct all residential type facilities together in a location which is separated from maintenance operations and public use facility developments. Development of both the residence and bunkhouse north of the old driveway in compliance with Carver County's ordinance on bluff top and road setbacks, would not be physically possible considering the limited area available. The Service's concern regarding flood plain development and the potential to lose any capital investments during a major flood event were stated. The Service does not have Congressional approval to purchase lands beyond the Refuge's designated boundary.*

Sept. 17, 2004: Received letter from SFT resident expressing concern over dust control in front of his house on Carver Highlands Drive related to new maintenance shop use. Concern was also expressed over Service maintenance and burning operations on Refuge land nearby or adjacent to his property in addition to the site of the new maintenance shop.

Sept. 16, 2004: Refuge received call from SFT resident regarding possibility of cross-contamination of his well or the aquifer from septic systems which would be developed for the residence and bunkhouse. The

resident's property is located in a low area west of Service land and soils consist primarily of gravel. The County has tested his well and others in the area and nearby wells have shown higher nitrate levels. Resident suggested developing septic systems closer to the bluff or reconfigure ditch along County Road 45. *The well in question is located approximately 1,100' west of the proposed Service developments. The Refuge consulted representatives from the Service's Regional Office Engineering staff and Carver County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). As per Service engineering, the Service will comply with standard septic designs which are a minimum of three feet above the seasonal high water table or consist of a mound system. Any septic system designs utilized by the Service will be approved by Carver County and the installed system will be inspected by the County as well prior to use. It was also noted that septic contamination of wells or the groundwater is indicated by the presence of fecal coliforms not nitrates. The Carver County SWCD confirmed they are aware of the concern with well contamination. The contamination is from nitrates only which is related to agricultural activity; no fecal coliforms have been found in any wells tested.*

Sept. 23, 2004: Received e-mail from SFT resident who had been out of town since the time the Refuge sent out notice about the public comment period. Concern was expressed over placement of proposed residence and bunkhouse related to access concerns on Highway 45 and sewer/water issues connected to bunkhouse development. Resident also questioned why residence and bunkhouse couldn't be built at Mittelsted farm site. The resident also expressed several other comments related to Refuge operations such as the maintenance shop location and lighting, horse use on the Refuge, and parking lot development along County Road 45. *The residence will be a single family house so its occupation will have very limited impact on County Road 45 access or traffic concerns.*

Sept. 23, 2004: Received call from SFT landowner who resides in Eden Prairie. Resident had several questions related to bunkhouse development, the new maintenance complex development, and hunting on Federal and State lands. Resident also wanted to know what authority he had if he just didn't want any developments there. *The NEPA process was explained.*

8. References Cited

Final Environmental Assessment, Proposed Maintenance Operations Complex and Residence, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, June 2003.

Intra-Service Section 7 Evaluation Form, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, July 24, 2003.

Appendix